



## WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION OF THE DELAWARE RIVER BASIN

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE | April 2, 2026

### WRA Honors Wildlands Conservancy with 2026 Dr. Ruth Patrick Excellence in Education Award

*Lehigh River watershed organization recognized for connecting communities to nature and cultivating the next generation of water advocates*

---

The Water Resources Association of the Delaware River Basin (WRA) has named Wildlands Conservancy the recipient of its 2026 Dr. Ruth Patrick Excellence in Education Award. The award honors an individual or organization who educates and informs people on key issues related to the water resources of the Delaware River Basin.

Awards will be presented at WRA's 2026 Awards Gala on Thursday, April 23 at the Fairmount Water Works in Philadelphia. All are invited.

*"These awardees are leading with science, collaboration and vision to advance resilience and sustainability in the Delaware River Basin and beyond. WRA's Awards Gala is a unique opportunity for our community across the four states — New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Delaware — to come together and honor these programs and individuals making an indelible mark on the health of our basin."*

— Jennifer Garigliano, WRA Board President

*"WRA unites people and organizations across geographies, sectors, and disciplines to address our region's most complex water resources challenges. These awards celebrate leaders whose science, ingenuity, and long-term stewardship protect drinking water, restore aquatic ecosystems, and advance a legacy of excellence in water management."*

— Skelly Holmbeck, WRA Executive Director

*"Wildlands Conservancy provides a vital service within the Lehigh River watershed through their land preservation efforts and robust community education programming. Through their programs, Wildlands has built so many amazing opportunities for citizens and students to connect with nature at locations throughout the basin. The next generation of water advocates get inspired through the hands-on, fun learning experiences created by this dedicated team."*

— Liesel Gross, CEO, Lehigh County Authority

*"Receiving the 2026 Dr. Ruth Patrick Excellence in Education Award is a meaningful recognition of Wildlands Conservancy's work in environmental education. We believe that fostering curiosity, stewardship, and access to nature empowers individuals and communities to care for our shared natural resources, and we are deeply grateful to our educators, partners, volunteers, and community who make this work possible every day."*

— Nicole Landis, Senior Community Engagement Specialist, Wildlands Conservancy



## WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION OF THE DELAWARE RIVER BASIN

### 2026 WRA AWARD RECIPIENTS

**Samuel S. Baxter Memorial Award:** Distinguished Professor Ximing Guo, in recognition of his visionary Delaware Bay shellfish genetics research, establishing transformative innovations that have advanced global aquaculture, Basin water resources and resilience through decades of sustained scientific excellence.

**Lifetime Achievement Award:** Richard W. Greene, PhD, distinguished scientist and mentor whose career advanced the understanding of toxic contaminants, created Delaware's fish advisory program, and shaped regional policy through collaborative excellence.

**Waterside Land Development, Conservation and Preservation Award:** PIDC, Philadelphia's public-private economic development partner and Master Developer of the Navy Yard, for extraordinary leadership in transforming The Navy Yard waterfront into a dynamic engine of sustainable growth through resilient design and environmental stewardship.

**Special Recognition Award:** Penn State Extension Master Watershed Steward Program, for outstanding work conserving and enhancing waterways and green spaces through community education and outreach to advance ecological resilience in the Delaware River Basin.

**Young Leaders Award:** Abdullah Al-Amin, PhD, Philadelphia Water Department, for rigorous and pioneering stormwater science, engaging collaboration, and the rare gift of making complex ideas clear in service of clean water across the Delaware River Basin.

**WRA Achievement Award:** Philadelphia Water Department's Flat Rock Dam Improvement Project, for transforming the Manayunk Canal into a thriving aquatic ecosystem connected to the Schuylkill River, and created a welcoming place for wildlife and the community.

**Dr. Ruth Patrick Excellence in Education Award:** Wildlands Conservancy, for providing accessible, high-quality education about watershed systems, water quality, habitat health, and the ways human activities influence the Delaware River Basin.

*Learn more about our Awardees at [wrdrb.org](http://wrdrb.org).*

---

### CONTACT

Skelly Holmbeck, Executive Director | 561.707.3186 | [ed@wrdrb.org](mailto:ed@wrdrb.org)

### ABOUT THE WATER RESOURCES ASSOCIATION OF THE DELAWARE RIVER BASIN

WRADRB is a nonprofit, non-partisan organization that promotes the science-based management of water resources within the Delaware River Basin to protect water-dependent uses and enhance the long-term sustainability and resilience of the river system. WRADRB unites and represents water users and anyone dependent on, or interested in, the Basin's water resources. More at [wrdrb.org](http://wrdrb.org).